



Project of the *Vermont Research Partnership* among the Vermont Agency of Human Services, Vermont Department of Education, Vermont Association of Regional Partnerships, and The University of Vermont

Project: Our Voices: Our Community Program

Outcome of Well-Being: *Families, Youth, and individuals are Engaged in their Community's Decisions and Activities (# 1)*

Project Participants: Teenage youth in Vermont.

Project Location(s): Community and School sites throughout Vermont.

Project Description: The program seeks to enhance youth assets by engaging youth in community and school based initiatives. Participating in the curriculum and community projects help youth to expand their definitions of leadership and to see themselves as leaders and valued partners in their communities.

Indicators Used to Track Progress: **Written surveys and focus groups track the following:**

1. Youth definitions of leadership
2. Youth perceptions of self as leader
3. Youth sense of being valued by peers and adults
4. Youth engagement in their communities
5. Youth experience with setting and reaching goals
6. Youth knowledge and skills

Findings To-Date / How this Project Contributes to Well-Being Outcome #1:

- 113 youth and adult facilitators reached 528 youth participants, ages 13-18, in Vermont. This included 18 youth with disabilities.
- Youth gained confidence at expressing themselves and a sense that what they say is valued by others, leading to deeper connections with peers and adults.
- Youth gained knowledge and skills in decision-making, critical thinking, appreciating diversity, responsibility, and teamwork, leading to greater self-confidence, moral development, empowerment, and connections with peers.
- Youth broadened their concept of who can be a leader and how leadership happens, sometimes changing their view of themselves as leaders. Females were more apt than males to believe that every person could be a leader.
- The projects gave participants an opportunity to set and reach goals, learn new skills, and experience the challenges and rewards of making a difference in other people's lives.

Project Timeline / Status: The initial evaluation was completed in June 2004 on the program implemented between January 2003 and June 2004. The program continues to be offered and evaluation will continue to track progress.

Program Partners: University of Vermont (evaluation); Vermont Children's Forum and the Vermont Rural Partnership (program), Department of Employment and Training (funding).

Researchers and Institutional Affiliations: Monika Baege, (University of Vermont), Helen Beattie (Vermont Children's Forum).

For More Information:

Name: Monika Baege

Address: 38 School Street, Essex Jct, VT 05452

Telephone: (802) 872-0135

Email: monika.baege@uvm.edu